UNITED NATIONS

CEDAW

Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women

Distr.
GENERAL

CEDAW/C/5/Add.10/Amend.1*
21 March 1984

ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: ARABIC

Committee on the Elimination of
Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)
Third Session

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES
UNDER ARTICLE 18 OF THE CONVENTION

Initial reports of States Parties

ARAB REPUBLIC OF EGYPT

* Reissued for technical reasons.

V.84 83708

Legal measures taken with regard to the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women

The Convention was signed by Egypt at the World Conference on the United Nations Decade for Women, Copenhagen, 1980. It was ratified by the People's Assembly (Parliament), the highest authority empowered to enact laws, on 18 September 1982.

Validity of the provisions of the Convention before law courts

The Egyption Constitution and Egyptian legislation conform in all respects with the provisions of the Convention. The question of the validity of the provisions of the Convention or of referral to them before law courts does not arise.

Constitutional and administrative measures relevant to provisions of the Convention

1. Equality of men and women in all rights

This is guaranteed by article 11 of the Constitution, which stipulates that the State guarantees harmony between women's family duties, their activity in society, and their equality with men in the political, social, cultural and economic fields of life, without prejudice to the prescriptions of Ismalic religious law (Shari'a). Furthermore, article 40 stipulates the complete equality of all citizens in all rights and duties, without distinction of sex, origin, language, religion or belief.

2. Equality in political life

In this respect, Egyptian legislation guarantees women's representation in Parliament, as stipulated by Law 73 of 1956, as amended by Law 41 of 1979, on the exercise of political rights (article 4): "All males and females who exercise political rights must be registered in the balloting lists." Law 38 of 1972, as amended by Law 21 of 1973 and Law 114 of 1983 (article 3): "All lists in 31 constituencies must include one female member in addition to the male members assigned to it ...".

This also applies to the composition of the local councils; Local Council Law 43 of 1979, as amended by Law 50 of 1979, gives women a number of seats in the people's assemblies of the governates, the city councils, district councils, and village councils. The number of seats allocated to women on these councils is usually one or two, in addition to which women have the right to compete with men for the other seats.

Important changes that took place in the structure and membership of the trade unions added about one hundred thousand female workers to the trade union movement. In the electoral cycle 1983-1987, voting for workers' representatives on company boards resulted in 22 women obtaining seats, while 6 women won seats in the 1983-1987 electoral cycle on the executive committees of the general trade unions.

Women in Egypt occupy Cabinet posts, participate in the planning of national policies, and have attained positions of leadership in many sectors. Egypt has women ambassadors, and its women participate in many international conferences.

3. Equality in acquiring, retaining and changing citizenship

Article 11 of Law 26 of 1975, on Egyptian citizenship, stipulates that loss of Egyptian citizenship by an Egyptian who has adopted another nationality after having been granted permission to do so shall not entail a similar loss of Egyptian citizenship by his wife, unless she decides to acquire her husband's new nationality according to the laws of his country.

Article 12 stipulates that an Egyptian woman who marries a foreigner shall retain her Egyptian citizenship, unless she desires to acquire her husband's nationality, and expresses such desire at the time of her marriage or during her marriage, and is permitted by the law of her husband's country to acquire its nationality. Nevertheless, she retains her Egyptian citizenship if she declares her desire to do so within one year of acquiring her husband's nationality.

Article 13 stipulates that an Egyptian woman who has lost her citizenship in accordance with para. 1, article 11, and para. 1, article 12, may regain her Egyptian citizenship if she so requests, and with the approval of the Minister of the Interior, and shall regain Egyptian citizenship upon the termination of her marriage if she is residing in Egypt or if she returns to reside in Egypt, and expresses such a desire.

Article 14 also stipulates that a wife who was an Egyptian citizen and lost that citizenship, as well as a wife of Egyptian origin, acquires this citizenship if it is granted to her husband or by virtue of her marriage to an Egyptian, upon her advising the Minister of the Interior of her desire to do so. As regards granting women equal rights with men with respect to the nationality of her children, the law grants her this right in the following cases:

(a) A child born in Egypt of an Egyptian mother and a father of unknown nationality or a stateless father;

(b) A child born in Egypt of an Egyptian mother, whose father is not legally determined;

(c) A child born abroad of an Egyptian mother, whose father is unknown or stateless or whose nationality is unknown, if he chooses Egyptian citizenship within one year of reaching the age of reason.

4. Equality in work

Egyptian women have entered virtually every field of work, although in varying degrees, even including the judiciary, in which they have positions in the juvenile courts and in the public prosecutor's office. They are also about to enter the police; the first group of female law graduates has enrolled at the Police Academy and will become police officers on completing the course there. Female law graduates have already been employed in such police work as the morals bureau and the care of young persons.

Women are employed in the health and educational services, which absorb about 80 per cent of the total number of women in government service. They also occupy a large percentage of posts in scientific research in, for example, the National Research Institute, the Nuclear Energy Authority, the Scientific Research Academy, and other research institutes and centres. Egyptian women are also prominent in industry, both in government enterprises and in the public and private sectors. Their numbers have consistently increases in this field over the past ten years. For example, the number of women workers at the Cairo Dyeing Company was 55 in 1975, and rose to 281 in 1983. There were only two women workers at the Aboukir Fertilizers and Chemical Industries Company in 1975; by 1983 the number had risen to 74.

Women workers have acceded to leading and supervisory positions. For example, there were about 70 female workers holding leading positions at the highest administrative level in the industrial sector, in addition to those taking over middle management functions (head of department - chief of section). In the Nasr Engineering and Refrigeration Company, for instance, there were 11 female workers performing supervisory tasks.

Women receive equal remuneration with men for the same work. They benefit from all job advantages such as allowances and promotion, on an equal footing with their male colleagues.

For the protection of women, there are certain jobs where they are not employed, for reasons of health or morals, such as working in bars or gambling clubs, working with blast furnaces, manufacturing explosives and working underground in mines and quarries. The law also stipulates that women may not be employed at night (between 8 p.m. and 7 a.m.) except in certain situations, jobs and occasions laid down in a directive from the Minister of Labour. Such

jobs include, for example, work in hospitals, asylums and other medical centres; in hotels, restaurants, pensions and cafeterias under the supervision of the Ministry of Tourism; in theatres, cinemas and similar places, and work in airports and tourist agencies.

The young women of Egypt have opened a door which was previously closed to them, viz., that of the vocational training centres. The first group of girl trainees were enrolled in September 1981, in the Turah Centre for Metallurgy and Electricity and the Tanta Vocational Training Centre for Electrical Engineers. Each group was composed of 33 female trainees. There were no signs of any problems during their training course, and training programmes for girls continued. The Department of Productivity and Vocational Training is at present training a number of women chemists to work as instructors in special areas of chemistry.

As a result of the increased numbers of women workers in all sectors, a series of laws have been enacted to assist working women in reconciling their family duties with those of their work. The laws concerning workers in Government administration, in public authorities and in units of the public sector, have laid down that working women have the right to leave without pay for the purpose of looking after their children, up to a maximum of two years at one time, and on three occasions during their working lives; and either that the administrative authority shall bear both the social security contributions payable by itself and those payable by the woman worker, or that the woman worker shall be granted compensation equal to 25 per cent of the salary to which she is entitled on the starting date of her leave, at her own choice. It was also decided that the woman worker shall be entitled to maternity leave for three months after confinement, on three occasions during her working life. This is fully paid leave, and is not to be included in the ordinary leave entitlement. The administrative authority also recommended that rules be drawn up for work on the basis of half-time work for half-pay.

With regard to the private sector, Law No. 137 of 1981 provided women workers with the protection they needed to reconcile family and work without detriment to the employer's interests. Its provisions include:

- Awarding the woman worker who has worked for the same employer for six months the right to 50 days' maternity leave on full pay, including the pre-natal and the post-natal period, on submission of a medical certificate indicating the probable date of confinement. However, the woman worker shall not be entitled to such leave on more than three occasions during her working life. A woman shall not be required to work for forty days after her confinement.

This care was also extended to the child. Article 155 of this law provides that for 18 months after confinement, a woman who breast-feeds her child is entitled to two breaks of not less than half an hour each for that purpose, in addition to the established work breaks. In addition, she has the right to combine those two periods and they are then calculated as working hours with no consequent reduction in pay.

- A woman worker may take leave without pay for a period not exceeding one year in order to look after her child. Such leave shall be granted three times during her working life, provided that the organization in which she works has at least 50 employees.
- The law requires that an employer who has one or more women workers shall display a copy of the regulations applying to women workers in his place of business.
- Emphasis is laid on the right of women workers to protect and take care of their children and to provide the appropriate conditions for developing their capacities. The law requires an employer with 100 or more women workers in one place either to set up or to employ a nursery to look after the children. It also stipulates that organizations employing fewer than 100 female workers in one area should implement this obligation as a joint enterprise. These will be supplementary to the nurseries set up by the State to provide care for the children of working and non-working women.

5. Equality in the field of social security

The social security system guarantees the treatment of women on a fully equal basis with men. Moreover, women are more privileged than men in cases where benefits would be awarded in terms of security. These can be detailed as follows:

- A Widow combines her pension after her husband's death with her own pension or income, without any limits thereto;
- A daughter is entitled to a pension after her father's death as long as she remains unmarried. She can regain this entitlement in case of divorce or widowhood;
- A sister is entitled to a pension after her brother's death;
- A mother is entitled to a pension after her son's death.

6. Equality in concluding contracts and administering property

The Egyptian woman enjoys from birth exactly the same legal rights as men. She may have her own independent finances and her own family name. Marriage has no effect on either, since a married woman can retain all her

full legal rights and independent finances without any reduction or supervision by her husband. Women themselves can conclude contracts and administer, supervise, enjoy and dispose of their property without their husband's intervention.

Minimum age for marriage and pregnancy

Egyptian law lays down the minimum age for marriage as 16 for females and 18 for males. The proposal that child betrothal and child marriage should be made illegal cannot apply in Egypt, since it conflicts with Islamic law. In the latter, a marriage can be contracted at puberty: this is either demonstrated by bodily changes or deemed to have come about on the 15th birthday. However, the legislator inclined towards the prevention of excessively early marriage by stipulating that cases involving marriage may not be heard if the wife was under 16 or the husband under 18. Furthermore, there is no legal requirement for marriage contracts to be officially registered. Nevertheless, the legislator inclined towards the restriction of unregistered marriages by stipulating that an alimony suit in the case of an unregistered (common-law) marriage may not be heard, though a paternity case may be heard, in order to protect the child of such a marriage.

(a) Developments that took place and programmes and institutions established as from the entry into force of the Convention

1. The General Department for Women's Affairs within the Ministry of Social Affairs was established in 1977, as a Government body at national level to formulate policy for the development of Egyptian women, to devise government plans and programmes for the protection of women and their integration in development, to implement development projects for women at the local, regional and national levels and to co-operate with international organizations and authorities on women.

2. The National Commission for Women in Egypt was established as a higher commission for planning and co-ordination with representatives from all ministries, authorities and national women's societies concerned with the development of women. This Commission is headed by the Minister of Social Affairs, who is a woman. The Commission formulates policy for the development of women and puts into force the recommendations concerning women issued by international organizations, subject to the conditions of Egyptian society.

3. The National Commission for Women has set up an experimental project for the development of rural women in Upper Egypt in the provinces of Assiout, Sohag, Qena and Asswan, in co-operation with UNICEF, in order to assist women to increase their income and raise their social and economic status.

4. The National Commission for Women has set up a project for the service of working women in the two provinces of Cairo and Giza, in order to assist women workers in solving their problems and help them to fulfil their multiple roles as mothers, housewives and workers participating with men in the development of Egyptian society.

The project provides semi-prepared meals for working women and helps them in running their household affairs and cleaning their houses by employing home helps. In addition, clothes are manufactured for working women at reduced prices so as to increase their potential.

5. The National Commission for Women conducted field research on the situation and needs of Egyptian women. This research is considered an essential scientific basis in formulating and planning policy for the development of women.

6. Family guidance and counselling offices established by the Ministry of Social Affairs, totalling 71 and located in various villages and cities of Egypt, are concerned with resolving family problems brought to their attention. The average number of cases referred to them every year by religious courts, of cases, is about 8,500; they have been able to solve them, to preserve family coherence and stability, and to prevent divorce and break-up of families.

7. The Ministry set up a project for workers' households, aimed at increasing their income by training a woman, or a member of the family, in certain productive skills, providing raw materials and financial support, and marketing their products. The Ministry of Social Affairs has earmarked some £E3 m. for this project since the Convention was signed. During the period 1980-1983, some 420,000 girls and women have benefited from the project.

8. 246 women's clubs were created throughout the country; they provide training in some productive skills and women's leisure time is utilized in activities that will increase the households financial resources.

9. The Ministry of Social Affairs has increased the number of nurseries for child care to 2,341, of which 176 are for girls. It has also established 25 children's homes to accommodate children from 6-18 years of age who are deprived of family care. Furthermore, 174 social clubs have been created to occupy the leisure time, of children between six and 12.

10. The Ministry of Social Affairs supports 651 family planning centres to help women in birth control.

11. The Ministry of Social Affairs has created 25 institutions throughout the provinces of the republic, to care for girls exposed to moral danger.

12. Mother's Day and Children's Day are celebrated every year on 21 March and November 20 respectively, at the local and national levels.

In the domain of social security and aid to working women and families, the State offers financial aid amounting to £E 2.17 m.from which nearly one million families benefit.

13. In 1982, a public society for the protection of women was established to provide social care at national level.

14. Article 5 of the Convention called for the modification of the social and cultural behaviour patterns of men and women, with a view to eliminating prejudices, customs and other practices based on the idea of the inferiority or superiority of either sex.

With regard to this article, the National Commission on Women gave several interviews to officials of the mass media, in the press, and on the radio and television, with a view to correcting erroneous concepts regarding women and recognizing the equality of men and women; radio and television programmes were scheduled at appropriate times so that women, whether workers or housewives, could watch them and listen to them. Likewise, the Ministry of Education reviewed all curricula at various teaching stages, and corrected the erroneous concepts regarding women so that they should be on an equal footing with men, forbidding the use of any expression that represent them as inferior.

With regard to Article 12 of the Convention, concerning health care services, the State has created health centres for children and mothers, which also provide free public health services at public hospitals, it being understood that both men and women equally enjoy full rights to health care. The State also created rural health units in Egyptian rural areas to provide women with health and social care during pregnancy, to treat mothers and protect them against various diseases, to provide them with health care during pregnancy, confinement and the post-natal period, and to spread health education. The State made health insurance services universal for women workers and their families, by offering medical treatment and health care for a token payment.

The school Health Department of the Ministry of Health is responsible for health care services in boys' and girls' schools.

Furthermore, in the area of family planning, the State has acted at both local and governmental levels; a high council for family planning in Egypt has been instituted, together with public society for Family Programming and a

public society for Family Programming and a future family society. These bodies work through family planning centres in Egyptian cities and villages, offering family planning services to Egyptian women. Some 1.54 million families have benefited from these services. The total number of family planning centres set up by the Ministry is 482, and the annual subsidy is about £E 150,000, apart from financial allocations and grants received from international and foreign organizations. Regarding Article 13 of the Convention, the Nasser Social Bank has been extending its services for women, such as collecting alimony for divorced women, together with its other services, such as loans, mortgages and other forms of credit.

In connection with the same Article - the right of women to participate in recreational activities, sports and all aspects of cultural life - the General Directorate of Youth and Sport in Egypt gives women of all ages fully opportunity to join social, sport and cultural clubs and to take part in contests at both national and international level. Moreover, the Ministry of Education has introduced physical education as a basic subject for girls at different stages; it also introduced the training of women in camps so as to prepare them, physically, culturally and socially to become leaders and pioneers. In the field of education, a remarkable development can be noted in the education of women in Egypt. In 1924, the first girls' secondary school in Egypt was established. Ever since then, the State has continued to take an interest in the education of girls and young women up to university level. By 1983, there were 13,500 primary schools for boys and girls. The number of female students enrolled in Egyptian universities in 1983 was 225,000; the number of women who graduate from a university or higher educational establishment is estimated at 47,000 annually.

In connection with Article 10 of the Convention, Egypt grants the right of education to both men and women. This is provided in Article 8 of the Egyptian Constitution of 1971: "The State shall ensure equal opportunities to all citizens". Furthermore, Article 18 of the Constitution provides for the right of both sexes to education and for the State to guarantee this right.

The State has also ensured free education at all levels. This is laid down in Article 20 of the Constitution: "Free education in State educational institutions at its various stages".

In the area of women's right to education (Article 10 of the Convention), the proportion of female students is 40% of the total number. At university level, female students show more interest than male students in home economics, languages, tourism and hotel management, information (mass media), arts, economics and political science.

In 1982-83, the proportion of women students enrolled for master's degrees and doctorates was 33.8% of the total number of students.

In terms of public and community services rendered to Egyptian women, under Article 13 of the Convention the National Commission for Women issued a series of guidebooks and a manual on procedural services for women, to explain the steps to be taken for services and the documents to be submitted. In connection with Article 14 of the Convention, the National Commission for Women was formed to assume the following special tasks:

(1) To follow-up the implementation of national plans for the development of women, and to suggest means of adjustment to social, economic and political changes occurring in Egyptian society;

(2) To call on all ministries and bodies sharing membership of the Commission to draw up plans and programmes for the development of women;

(3) To follow-up the implementation of such plans and programmes, to examine the results of the follow-up process and propose necessary measures to overcome the difficulties of implementation;

(4) To propose research work and studies related to the conditions of women in various sectors, utilizing research institutions in these studies; the National Commission for Women includes representatives of the following ministries:
Foregin Affairs, Social Affairs and Security, Education, Health, Labour, Industry, Higher Education, Culture and Information, Agriculture, Justice, and Supplies.

It also includes representatives from Parliament (People's Assembly), broadcasting, television, the press, the National Centre for Social and Criminal Research, the Labour Union, the General Confederation of Associations, some major national societies, trade unions, and some Egyptian experts in development.

Sub-committees of the National Commision for Working Women are:

1. The Legal Committee,
2. The International Co-operation Committee,
3. Research and Conferences Committee,
4. Planning and Follow-up Committee,
5. Information Committee.

These Committees are engaged in planning and preparation for the development of women and providing them with assistance in overcoming the obstacles that stand in their way.